Eastex Telephone Cooperative, Inc.
"A Phone For Every Farm"
"Broadband For Every Barn"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

USDA Administrator Andrew Berke Visits Eastex Telephone Cooperative to Discuss Importance of Rural Broadband Investments

HENDERSON, TX – November 3, 2023 - Eastex Telephone Cooperative, Inc. ("Eastex") is hosting a press event Monday, November 6, 2023, to discuss the importance of rural broadband investment with USDA Rural Development's Rural Utilities Service Administrator Andrew Berke. Berke's visit comes just days after USDA announced over $5 billion has been committed to supporting rural communities through the White House's Investing in Rural America Event Series, and just one day before election day, during which Texas voters have an unprecedented opportunity to support $1.5 billion in broadband infrastructure funding from the State of Texas under Proposition 8.

The newly announced $5 billion in federal investments for rural initiatives includes Eastex's recently awarded $25 million in grant funding through USDA's ReConnect Loan and Grant Program, which combined with an $8.4 million investment from Eastex will deliver high-speed fiber-to-the-premises Internet service to customers in the socially vulnerable communities of Maydelle and Hudson Chapel within Cherokee County. In addition to essential broadband infrastructure, the $5 billion in federal commitments will support conservation programs, smart agriculture, jobs, community infrastructure and energy programs within rural areas.

"We are excited and honored to host Andrew Berke and discuss this historic commitment to rural infrastructure from both state and federal levels of government," said Eastex General Manager Rusty Dorman. "Since 1950, Eastex has worked hard to bridge the technological divide between urban and rural communities. We now encourage all Texans to vote for Proposition 8 to further funding initiatives that will enable better access to healthcare, enhanced public safety, more educational opportunities and economic development for rural East Texas."

"The Biden-Harris Administration is committed to ensuring every rural community across America – like those in East Texas – has access to reliable, high-speed internet," said Rural Utilities Service Administrator Andy Berke. "I'm excited to see Eastex break ground on this project and bring new opportunities to East Texas, so people can thrive and stay in the rural communities they love."

Berke joined USDA with nearly three decades of experience as a dedicated public servant with a history of advocating for rural communities in federal, state and local government, especially with respect to broadband service and digital inclusion. Prior to

joining USDA, Berke served as a Special Representative for Broadband at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, and before that, was the Mayor of Chatanooga, Tennessee, where he established a first-of-its-kind program to expand free high-speed internet service to families with children receiving free or reduced lunch at school.

About the Press Event
Location: Eastex Headquarters, 3675 US Highway 79 South, Henderson, Texas 75653
Time: 2:00 PM, CST
Open to Eastex staff, USDA staff, and media personnel

About USDA Rural Development RUS
RUS provides financing to build or improve infrastructure in rural communities. This includes water and waste treatment, electric power and telecommunications services. These services help expand economic opportunities and improve the quality of life for rural residents. The ReConnect Program is an innovative program that offers unique federal financing and funding options in the form of grants, loans, and loan/grant combinations to facilitate broadband deployment in areas of rural America that don't currently have sufficient access to internet. To learn more about ReConnect please visit https://www.usda.gov/reconnect.

About Eastex Telephone
Eastex Telephone Cooperative, Inc. has over 70 years of experience bringing essential communications technology to eleven counties across rural East Texas. Today, Eastex and its affiliates and subsidiaries Eastex.Net and ECS Security and Automation are proud to deliver top-quality broadband Internet, voice, high-capacity data transport, Wi-Fi, and security and automation services to thousands of subscribers from three regional business offices in Henderson, Livingston and Waskom, Texas.

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